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Yours, sincerely, W. G. Farlow

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WILLIAM GILSON FARLOW[1]

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Since the death of Asa Gray, in 1887, no American botanist has been accorded quite the esteem in which Professor Farlow was held. As with Bornet, this was due even more to a large influential acquaintance and a recognized conservative well-informed sanity in judgment, than to volume or importance of the publications of his later life. Indeed, for some years past he has been rather hesitant about putting into print things that he knew better than others—possibly through the realization of age, that nothing is really finished even when an expert gets to the end of what he can do with it; that sometime or other somebody else can go as far; and that in any event somebody else will have to start again at the beginning, sometime or other.

Merely to possess a large acquaintanceship does not mean necessarily that a man will be liked or admired or respected. Professor Farlow's personality was such that with few and unimportant exceptions the many who had the privilege of knowing him liked and admired and respected him to an unusual degree. His character and talent and learning were such as to command affection, admiration, and respect. If either attribute was ever withheld by a colleague or acquaintance it was because of an utter failure to understand his nature, which did not court praise or deference and sometimes in an effort to escape one or the other prompted a seeming cynicism or levity which was as unreal as it was ready and brilliant.

Dr. Farlow was characterized not only by an artistic temperament but by unusual quickness of perception and response. Those who knew him best were likely to hesitate before engaging him in even the most friendly of bantering encounters: but his tongue was not sharp for those of whom he disapproved, and when he wanted to bring a thing into question he had the art of doing it by some most inoffensive but nevertheless unmistakable anecdote or figure of speech.

Men who enlist the interest of others differ greatly in the way in which they communicate their own enthusiasm. Gray bubbled over with it as he worked and talked. Farlow was much less effusive, but those who were

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privileged to know him and study under his supervision saw his manifest interest in their work and imbibed some of his unobtrusive enthusiasm over his own work. It is unlikely that any student who came near enough to him in space or age or mentality really to know him, remembers him more vividly in any respect than as a kind friend—observant, thoughtful, and helpful, but with a tact that prevented any impression that he saw the need of the help that he gave.

In the history of American botany, Professor Farlow figures as the personality through whom thallophytes passed into the field of college botany. Classic work had been done on them by men not filling college chairs, and voluminous work of lasting value continues to be done by such men: but it was his privilege to teach as well as to investigate in this field. He considered himself a botanist rather than a phycologist or a mycologist, and he never called himself a phytopathologist.

Many of his published papers deal with the algae, and his opinion on our seaweeds was taken everywhere and always as authoritative; but he did not train many men in their study. When his own opportunity to work under a master came, it was the fungi that he elected, and De Bary to whom he went; and his greatest service as a teacher and an investigator was rendered in this special field of botany, out of which the half-segregated practical applications of plant pathology evolved during his lifetime.

Though never very robust, and subject to frequent distressing if not serious ailments, Dr. Farlow was an indefatigable worker and an insatiable reader—never satisfied with what somebody said that somebody else had said. During the later years of his life he was freed from the burden of teaching, but compelled to shoulder a business responsibility involving the administration of large financial interests. He neither had nor apparently wished the relaxation commonly considered the due of a septuagenarian. Like the friend and mentor of his youth, Asa Gray, he died in the harness; and the great herbarium and library that he has left to Harvard University with a liberal endowment will keep in memory the debt of his Alma Mater and of the botanical world to him, our foremost authority on the thallophytes, as effectively as the greatest student of American flowering plants is commemorated in the Gray Herbarium of the same institution.

The traits which marked Professor Farlow's mature and professional life were forecast in his descent and development. He was born and educated in Boston. His parents were of New England stock, and his father in addition to being a successful business man was active in public service and a supporter of horticultural and musical organizations. As a student he was as brilliantly diverting as his intimates found him to be in later life, with a penchant for natural history. He graduated from Harvard College in 1866 and from the Harvard Medical School in 1870, and for the next two years assisted Professor Gray in the botanical department of the college. The next two years were spent in Europe, partly in travel and partly as a graduate student at Strasbourg. For several years after his return home he taught in the Bussey Institution of Harvard University as assistant professor of botany; but from 1879 until his retirement from active service in 1896 he taught in Cambridge, with the title of professor of cryptogamic botany, which he held up to the time of his death, when he had become the senior member of the faculty.

PUBLICATIONS

The following list of Dr. Farlow's publications has been prepared from memoranda furnished by Mr. A. P. D. Piguet and is as nearly complete as it has been possible to make it, except that none of his numerous reviews of books and articles have been included.

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The potato rot. Bull. Bussey Inst. **1**: 319–338.

1876. Gustave Thuret. Journ. Bot. **14**: 4.

Fungi heaped up in pines by squirrels. Amer. Nat. **10**: 112.

On a disease of olive and orange trees occurring in California in the spring of 1875. Bull. Bussey Inst. **1**: 404. Abstr. in Journ. Bot. **14**: 287.

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On the American grape vine mildew. Bull. Bussey Inst. **1**: 415.

Synopsis of the Peronosporeae of the United States. Bull. Bussey Inst. **1**: 426.

List of fungi found in the vicinity of Boston. Bull. Bussey Inst. **1**: 430.

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Botany; pp. CLXXV–CLXXX, in Annual Record of Science and Industry for 1876.

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Diseases of fruit-bearing trees. Rept. Mass. Board Agr. 1877: 218.

1879. Botany: in Annual Record of Science and Industry (editor S. F. Baird) 1878. Also in other volumes.

Diseases of forest trees. Trans. Mass. Hort. Soc. 1879: 44.

List of algae collected at points in Cumberland Sound during the autumn of 1877. Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus. **15**: 169.

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